

News Release



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For immediate release

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WILDLIFE LAB HOSTS WEEK-LONG FORENSICS CONFERENCE

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory, located in Ashland, Oregon, will host the 2004 fall meeting of the Northwest Association of Forensic Scientists (NWAFS) during the week of October 25-29, 2004.

Some 100 scientists representing U.S. and international public and private forensics laboratories are expected to attend the meeting, which will focus on the field of wildlife forensics as the “missing link” in wildlife conservation. The NWAFS is a professional association dedicated to the advancement of forensic science; it draws members from throughout both the United States and Canada.

“We welcome this opportunity to help showcase the field of wildlife forensics for our professional colleagues,” said Laboratory Director Ken Goddard. “Forensic science is as vital to solving wildlife crimes as it is to standard police investigations.”

The Laboratory, the world’s only full-service facility dedicated exclusively to analyzing evidence related to wildlife crimes, typically works on more than 5,000 cases a year, most of them submitted by Service law enforcement officers who uphold the Nation’s wildlife protection laws and treaties.

“In some areas, such as ballistics and computer forensics, we use many of the same analytical techniques as our counterparts at traditional crime labs,” explained Director Goddard. “But our scientists and others working in the wildlife arena also address an array of problems involving the identification and individualization of literally thousands of different wildlife species in both animal and product form.”

The NWAFS meeting will open with two days of special workshops focused on some of the unique analytical challenges encountered in wildlife forensics. These half-day sessions, conducted by Service scientists at the Forensics Laboratory itself, will examine the differentiation of human and animal bone; analysis of animal hair; feather identification; and the role of forensics pathology in wildlife investigations.

On Wednesday, October 27, conference participants will gather at the Ashland Springs Hotel for a keynote address by Valerius Geist, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science and Adjunct Professor of Biology at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada. Dr. Geist, who is known for his studies of such species as mountain sheep, elk, and mule deer and his opposition to the sale of game farm hunting opportunities, will share his perspectives on wildlife conservation and the law.

The meeting schedule includes 2½ days of technical paper presentations; a poster session is slated for Wednesday evening. Scientists presenting papers include 40 forensic specialists and staff members from the Service Laboratory.

Technical presentations will cover a variety of topics related to wildlife forensics. A complete schedule for the meeting can be found at <http://www.lab.fws.gov/nwafs.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.